

INDIAN SEA OATS

Chasmanthium latifolium

(Michx.) Yates

plant symbol = CHLA5

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches (TX)
Technical Office and the National Plant Data Center



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Alternate Names

Indian woodoats, broadleaf wood-oats, creek oats,
Indian sea-oats, inland sea-oats, broadleaf uniola;
Uniola latifolia

Uses

Woods-oats does not appear to be preferred forage for livestock or wildlife. However, cattle will graze this species. The inflorescence is occasionally used in the dried flower business.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Grass Family (Poaceae). *Chasmanthium latifolium* (previously in the *Uniola* genus and commonly called broadleaf uniola) is a native,

rhizomatous perennial often found in small colonies. The leaves are broad (0.8 to 2.0 cm) and 10-20 cm long. The leaf shape and size are similar to many of the larger species of panic (*Panicum* species) grasses. The height of this grass and the inflorescence (seed cluster) somewhat resemble domestic oats; thus, the common name "wood, creek, or sea oats." The weight of the seed heads causes the inflorescence to droop.

Distribution

Known from Arizona to Florida and Michigan to New Jersey. For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Establishment

Adaptation: In Texas, this species is very common on loamy, terrace soils adjacent to creeks, bayous and rivers in eastern Texas, particularly under a hardwood forest canopy. It becomes less common westward, although it is found under favorable conditions in the Edwards Plateau, Rio Grande Plains, and Southern Rolling Plains. It is quite common in river bottoms of the Western Gulf Coast Prairie. An abundance of *Chasmanthium latifolium* is usually a good indicator of a Class I or II soil; though, it will grow on wet natured clayey soils. It is never found on droughty sites. Some of the literature suggests that it is found in marshes and mud flats. However, stress appears to limit the colonies to 1-3 plants on wet sites, rather than the 10-30 plant colonies commonly found on better-drained sites.

General: There are 5-6 species of *Chasmanthium* in the U.S. and three in Texas. All are generally associated with forested ecosystems, but none resemble *Chasmanthium latifolium*. A similar species with regards to shade tolerance and vegetative growth habits, is savanna panic grass (*Phanopyrum gymnocarpon*). Older references refer to this plant as *Panicum gymnocarpon*. *Phanopyrum* occurs on very wet (ponded) sites and the inflorescence is completely different. Virginia wildrye (*Elymus virginicus*) in east Texas and Canada wildrye (*Elymus canadensis*) further west, commonly occupies similar forested sites but the seed head remains upright and the leaves of wildrye are clustered much more towards the base.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be online through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking

on Plant Materials. These plant materials are somewhat available from commercial sources.

References

Davis, L. 2000. *Texas plant fact sheet: Chasmanthium latifolium*. USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches Technical Office #2, Nacogdoches, Texas.

USDA, NRCS 2000. *The PLANTS database*. <<http://plants.usda.gov>>. 001206. National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Prepared By

Lee Davis

USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches Technical Office #2,
Nacogdoches, Texas

Species Coordinator

Lee Davis

USDA, NRCS, Nacogdoches Technical Office #2,
Nacogdoches, Texas

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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